

S E R M O N

Preached before the

L O R D S Spiritual and Temporal

I N T H E

A B B Y - C H U R C H , W E S T M I N S T E R ,

O n M O N D A Y , J A N U A R Y 31. 1763.

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Lord's Spiritual and Temporal

IN THE

Arch-Bishopric, Westminster

OF MONDAY JANUARY 31. 1733



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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S E R M O N

Preached before the

L O R D S Spiritual and Temporal

IN THE

ABBY-CHURCH, WESTMINSTER,

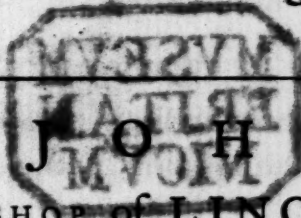
ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 31. 1763.

Being the DAY appointed to be Observed

A S T H E

Day of the MARTYRDOM of King CHARLES I.

By  J O H N, *Green*
Lord BISHOP of LINCOLN. *K*

L O N D O N :

Printed for B. DOD, in *Ave-Mary-Lane.*

M.DCCCLXIII.

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S E R M O N

Die Martis, 1^o Februarii, 1763.

ORDERED by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, That the Thanks of this House be and are hereby given to the Lord Bishop of LINCOLN, for the Sermon by him preached before this House Yesterday in the Abby-Church *Westminster*; And he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed and published.

ASHLEY COWPER, Cler. Parliamentor.



A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
LORDS Spiritual and Temporal
IN THE
ABBY-CHURCH, WESTMINSTER,
On MONDAY JANUARY 31. 1763.

ROMANS XIII. 7.

*Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due:
custom, to whom custom: fear, to whom fear: honour, to
whom honour.*

IT seems not to have been the intention of Christianity to give men a digest or regular system of precepts, that should extend to every instance of moral behaviour, and be applicable to all the various relations of life, public and private, in which they might be appointed to act. This, I think, will be evident to any one, who pays a due attention to the general tenor of the gospel-history, and the par-

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ticular purposes, to which the apostolic writings were chiefly directed. But then this institution is of admirable use, I should rather say, of apparent necessity in fixing the true foundation of our religious obedience, in enforcing the observance of its laws by the sanction of God's authority, in recommending them by the powerful incitement of a living example, and in laying before men such general rules of conduct, as might greatly help to direct them in the particular and occasional branches of their duty.

THE instructions that have been vouchsafed us on this head, what allegiance is due from subjects to their sovereign, have not specified, I apprehend, the different measures of submission, that may be required under all the different forms of government, which have obtained or may obtain in the world; but they have enjoined obedience in general to our civil governors, and pressed it in the most effectual manner by binding it on the conscience of every one, as God's will and appointment. The precise degrees of it, in various states and communities, they have not offered, as it came not within the compass of their design, to ascertain; but they left that matter, as it respected all Christians, to be settled by the laws and constitution of those countries, under which they should live.

WHAT our Saviour has delivered on this subject, as it was chiefly occasional, was expressed in a cautious manner, and suitable to those occasions. The character indeed which he sustained, and the commission with which he was invested, made such a conduct altogether necessary. For as his disciples were willing to indulge the flattering notion, that the kingdom, which he came to establish, would be a temporal
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one; it much concerned him to guard against any suspicion, he might give to a watchful government, of harbouring himself or of infusing into his followers any notions that would tend to raise tumults or sedition in the state; that might be hurtful to the power of civil rulers, or favour any pretensions of power in himself. We find him therefore inculcating the necessity of a peaceable behaviour, and dutiful submission to those in authority; explaining the nature and end of his own kingdom, so as to give no reasonable offence to the magistrates; and answering, with great prudence and caution, an insidious question of the Pharisees, relating to the payment of tribute*. Yet did not this guarded behaviour protect him from the malice of his enemies; who knew how effectual such a charge of sedition would be to awaken the jealousy, and stir up the resentment of the Roman governors.

THE apostles also on the several occasions, when their instructions on this head were wanted, expressed their sentiments in general terms. The newly-converted Jews were under a strong persuasion, arising from the notion of their peculiar relation to Jehovah, that if no princes were set over them by his immediate designation, they were released from all obligation of yielding obedience, or of paying tribute to any foreign magistrates. As subjects of God, they disclaimed all authority of men: and from the influence of this extravagant delusion were tempted "to despise dominion and speak evil of dignities †."

‡ St. Peter endeavours to undeceive them in a mistake so dangerous to their own safety, and so discreditable to their

* Mat. xxii. 21.

† Jude 8. 2 Pet. ii. 10.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

holy faith. He earnestly presses upon them submission to the governing powers, supreme and subordinate, as a duty obligatory under every form, because founded on the nature and end of all civil government, as well as agreeable to the will of God; which indeed is manifested as certainly in the visible constitution of things and the course of his general providence, as in the extraordinary and more striking interpositions of his power. But it was particularly incumbent on the early Christians to vindicate by their behaviour the honour and reasonableness of their religion, on which the practice of some injudicious followers had brought a reproach, as favouring a rebellious or inspiring a turbulent spirit. It is inculcated to them that they "were free indeed," but were not so to misunderstand that freedom, as a total exemption from the obligations and ties of civil authority; they were not therefore to use it as "a cloak of maliciousness," as a pretence of sedition, or a ground of disobedience to their lawful superiors.

ST. Paul gives instructions of the same nature, and supports them by the like arguments, to such of his Roman converts, who as lately become the subjects of Christ's kingdom, might imagine themselves released from all subjection to the government, under which they lived. He tells them, that government is "the ordinance of God;" the fixed means, established by his providence and resulting from the nature and frame of social beings, for the preservation of public peace and order: that submission is due to every form of it, as it has been settled suitably to the manners, temper and interests of different countries; not only on account of the benefits which it procures, not only through
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fear of that punishment, which they might incur by disobedience; but as a duty arising from the reason of the thing itself, and now confirmed by the express authority of God.

HIS own example will probably be the safest comment on his doctrine, and his behaviour to the rulers, spiritual and civil, before whom he was summoned to appear, best explain the nature and extent of that obedience, which he required as due to them. For though his injunctions of submission are given in general and unconditional terms; yet it will be evident from his own conduct, that he thought them proper to be observed with some limitations. No one could better practise or was more exercised in practising than himself, those passive virtues of Christian patience and fortitude under sufferings; yet we learn from the authentic monuments, which contain a relation of his acts, that he could also shew a just concern for the preservation and support of his civil privileges; could vigorously assert his right of judging, when those privileges were invaded; and express a becoming zeal against any illegal or arbitrary violations of them. Though he could observe on all proper occasions the severest precepts of our religion, yet he could also vindicate, we read, with due warmth the liberties and immunities of his birth-right; and though he perfectly knew how to bear private injuries as a Christian, yet he disdained quietly to submit to public indignities, as a Roman.

WE may observe in the Apostle's writings on this subject, that while he inculcates obedience to the magistrate, and defends his power against the fanciful exemptions of some enthusiastic advocates for liberty, he takes care to interweave
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some account of the beneficial uses for which that power was given, and the great purpose of general good to which it should ever be directed. So that with great skill and address, he explains the nature, and shews him the duty of his office, while he is engaged in pleading his cause, and in supporting his authority.

THE converts to Christianity continued then, I apprehend, under the same obligations of submission to their rulers, which laid upon them before their conversion; and the degree of that submission can only be determined by the nature of that government, under which its disciples live. Our religion, as it altered not the state and condition of commonwealths, neither encreased nor abridged the power of governors, or the privileges of the governed. It released not its followers from civil restraints and a due subjection to authority; much less is it to be loaded with the horrid imputation of entailing slavery upon them out of a principle of conscience, or establishing tyranny and the intemperate use of power, as an ordinance of God.

GOVERNMENT may be called a divine appointment, as being the great instrument, made use of in the course of God's providence to conduct the affairs of the world, and the best provision for the general good and security of his reasonable creation. This notion of it is agreeable to the maxims of ancient wisdom, and the sense of all civilized countries. It appears from the experience of all ages and nations to be so useful in maintaining the peace and advancing the common interests of society; to be so necessary for the regular execution of laws, and the due enjoyment of all those various blessings, that providence has vouchsafed us.

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It is so suited to the condition, so agreeable to the nature, so conducive to the happiness of man, that there is all possible reason to conclude from this constitution of things, God designed and framed him for such a state. But they draw an unwarrantable conclusion from this presumption of the divine will, and the sacred character with which the magistrate is hereby invested, that he is not to be opposed on pain of damnation, though he should act contrary to the good end, for which he was appointed; though he should presume to oppress those liberties, which he was ordained to support, and venture to trample on those laws, which he was commissioned to protect. It is hardly to be supposed, that the word of God has restrained men from acting in the case of extreme danger to all their rights and liberties, where the voice of reason has left them free; or that the Christian law has put them into a defenceless state, where the essential law of self-preservation has given them the necessary means of defence.

BUT I proceed to consider the nature and extent of the Apostolic precept; particularly as it is applicable to us, and is to be esteemed a proper rule and measure of our duty. And in doing this I shall occasionally look back to those heinous violations of it, with which they are justly chargeable, who involved these nations in a miserable scene of civil distractions; who carried on that unnatural war against their Sovereign; and committed at last that barbarous act of violence on his person, which we are now assembled to lament.

MANY useful reflections will naturally rise out of this sad part of our history; and when the serious and solemn observance

servance of this day is duly applied to that end, it will continue to answer those good purposes, for which it was probably set apart by the wisdom and humanity of our forefathers.

First then the Apostle directs his converted brethren at Rome, and the direction will equally extend to such Christians as belong to any other community, that they should render, to whom they are due, the settled proportion of tribute or custom. He undertakes not, it was not his business to decide on the justness or legality of any particular claims; this he leaves to be determined by the laws and established usages of the respective countries, in which those claims should be made. It has indeed an equitable foundation in reason, and takes place under all constitutions, that subjects should contribute to the expences of that government, under which they live and whose protection they enjoy; that they should help to strengthen the hands, and to support the authority of those, in whom the sovereign power is vested.

THESE grants are the grateful returns of a people to their supreme magistrate for the benefits, which they receive or expect from him. By these he is enabled to carry on the great ends of his office, to maintain the security and promote the interests of those, over whom he presides; to guard them against the violence of foreign, or the injuries of domestic enemies; to check or repel the attempts of those by arms and force, to prevent or punish the insults of these by the due and regular execution of laws.

THESE supplies may indeed be demanded in an exorbitant, or squandered away in an useless manner; they may be misapplied to feed the vanity or gratify the ambition,
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or administer to the luxury of those, to whom they are given, instead of answering the good purpose of protection and encouragement to them, by whom they are bestowed. But how rigorous soever may be the exactions of arbitrary power, we who live under a limited government, are secured against any wanton or illegal impositions of that nature. We hold not our possessions by the precarious tenure of another's will, but under the sacred guard and impartial administration of equal laws; no burthen in this respect can be laid upon us, but what is imposed by the consent and concurrence of such, as have been entrusted with the public voice, and deputed to act for the whole in the representative body of the nation.

AND here it is not to be dissembled, that some encroachments on the part of the crown, and attempts to raise money from the people by unconstitutional methods; some acts of power in erecting monopolies, and in imposing taxes without the consent or intervention of Parliament; the revival and rigorous execution of some laws, grown obsolete by disuse, that seemed intended to supply the place of these legal provisions; some hasty dissolutions of this great council, and a proclamation "to inhibit all men to speak of another," gave great room for clamour and invective to such as were ill-disposed to the government, gave some alarm and disagreeable apprehensions to such as were disposed well; as if those, who held the reins of government, were designedly breaking in upon this part of our constitution, and contriving expedients to defray the expences of the Sovereign, without having recourse to the usual and stated method of parliamentary supplies.

IT is also to be acknowledged, that the expounders of the gospel and of the law should have their share in the blame, as they were certainly concerned in promoting these unjustifiable proceedings. The former preached up the divine right of kings in so exalted a strain, as led their hearers to think, that it could hardly be subject to any limitations of law, or controuled in the exercise of its powers by any appointments of men. Some of them went farther, they so far exceeded the bounds of their authority and commission, as to declare, that the privileges of the subject were derived from the toleration of the prince, and that their properties were dependent on his pleasure: and to deliver it as a sacred truth, and a certain conclusion drawn from the oracles of God, that "his sole will in imposing taxes obliges the people's conscience on pain of damnation."

THIS false doctrine from the pulpit was confirmed by as faulty determinations of the bar: and those sages, who sat as the ministers of justice and arbiters of our civil rights, so far either faltered in their judgment or failed in the honest execution of their trust, as to pronounce those impositions to be agreeable to law, which in the opinion of the most knowing and impartial persons, at that time and since that time, have been held to be contrary to law.

THAT these wrong decisions would be a means of perverting the prince's judgment in so weighty an affair, is evident enough; how far they will go to excuse or justify any conduct, entered into in consequence of that judgment, I will not undertake to affirm. Ignorance of the law, the rule of the subjects obedience, is not thought a sufficient plea for any

any breaches of it by them; and why should ignorance of the constitution, the measure of the Sovereign's authority, be a better plea for any heinous violations of it by him?

HONOURED therefore by posterity would have been the memory of those, who at this dangerous juncture stood up in defence of their civil rights, and exerted themselves in opposition to those illegal exactions, had they stood where the subject's duty and the good of the community required that they should have stood; had they sought to remedy those evils by such methods of redress, as the constitution had provided; had not their intemperate zeal or ambition engaged them at length in such measures of violence, as proved destructive of that liberty which they stood up to maintain, and fatal to that government, which they had undertaken to protect.

FOR how is it to be reconciled with any upright intentions, that in the progress of this matter they acted in a way utterly repugnant to the principles, which they professed at the beginning? That in a more artful and covert manner at first, but openly and avowedly at last, they invaded their Prince's undoubted rights under the pretence of vindicating their own? That in this very article of imposing taxes on the people, as well as in the application of them, they acted unwarrantably by their own single authority, and did the very thing they had condemned, as an illegal proceeding in him?

As governors also are God's ministers, constituted to promote the general good of those over whom they are placed, we are enjoined, and the injunction is reasonable, to reverence the authority and to respect the persons of those,

who are invested with so high a trust, and appointed to administer so weighty an office. But then as we live under so happy a frame of government, in which the *laws* are the common measure of the Sovereign's authority as well as the subjects obedience, our rights and liberties are hereby secured to us in the most effectual manner; by those impartial laws we are protected, unless by our misbehaviour we forfeit that protection: we are under no apprehensions of feeling the iron rod of power; nor need be afraid of the magistrate's sword; but when we have made ourselves obnoxious to its justice. And

HERE it must be confessed, that the immoderate jurisdiction, which some tremendous courts claimed and exercised in the reign of that Prince, whose sad fate we are deploring, struck great terror into some, and created uneasy apprehensions in the minds of all men. For as they appointed many things to be observed that were not enjoined by law, and inflicted grievous penalties for the transgression of those appointments; as these censures were sometimes accompanied with expressions of harshness and passion, which made them more sensibly felt and more sharply resented; these acts of power brought much ill-will and reproach on the government, as giving too much countenance and support to such severe proceedings.

HARSH treatment was also used towards some in a matter of the most tender nature, the free profession of religion; which much encreased and sharpened the ill humour of that age. All the indulgence, that is suitable to the nature, and consistent with the safety of a religious establishment, is certainly due to the persuasions of conscience.

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The equitableness of these tolerant principles all parties have been ready enough to allow, though some have been occasionally backward to practice. Any invasion of these private and sacred rights is seldom submitted to with patience; and some hardships of this kind helped to sow the seeds of that discontent, whose bitter fruits were reaped in that dreadful harvest of calamities which followed.

BUT if too much room was given for murmur by acts of power exerted by the crown, or by some severities exercised in these courts of justice, yet how did the chief managers in this opposition act a justifiable or a consistent part, who pretended to have the same fears, when the main objects of their fear were removed? Who, when the regal power was reduced within its proper and constitutional bounds, were still as urgent in their demands of reducing it farther? Who were still as earnest for continuing, as they were for beginning the war against their King, when such concessions had been made by him, as were judged by much the greater part of the nation, and by all the moderate part of the great council, "to be a ground of peace?"

ARE not those fanatical leaders justly chargeable with the most notorious hypocrisy, who expressed the utmost detestation of popery, yet practised in their own church-government some of the most terrible of its maxims? Who being most loud in their complaints of suffering on account of conscience, when they became possessed of power, allowed liberty of conscience to no communion, but their own *? Who having earnestly contended for the right of worshipping God in such a manner as they thought most acceptable

* Ordinance in 1648.

acceptable to him; forbid all others on pain of fines and imprisonment to worship God, even in private assemblies, in any manner, but that prescribed by their directory * † Who having claimed for themselves the free exercise of private judgment in religious matters, adjudged the defending certain opinions, which they called heresies, to be felony; to be punished with imprisonment on conviction; and if not abjured, with death † ‡

A SUPERIOR share of honour is also required as due from us to the supreme magistrate; and to this he has an undoubted claim, if we consider the pre-eminence and extensive usefulness of his office, the cares to which it is always exposed, and the great difficulties, with which it is often attended.

To his hands are committed the reins of empire; which he holds with a more enlarged or restrained authority, agreeably to the consent of that people and the constitution of that state, over which he is placed. He is the head of that political body, which consists of many members, endowed with different powers and appointed to different offices, but the united application of all which is necessary to the welfare and strength and duration to the whole; or to use the representation of Scripture, he is the minister of God; is entrusted to bear that awful vicegerency, whereby he presides over the affairs of government, and as the subordinate minister of his providence, is employed in directing it to the great ends of public good, for which it was intended. He also is the source, from which all the inferior titles of honour are derived; and happy will it be for that community, where they are only bestowed as the distinctions

* Neal, Vol. III.

† Ordin. January 7, 1652.

tions of superior merit, or the rewards of eminent and faithful service. A due regard to his honour is also a matter of public concern, as not only the stability of government and the security of domestic peace, but the weight and interest of any country among other nations, greatly depend on the degree of credit and esteem, in which the Sovereign is held at home. Difficult likewise must be the task, and worthy of all honour he who executes it well, to guide with a steady hand the wheels of government; a machine so complicated in its frame, and consisting of such a variety of movements; all liable to be disturbed, as well by the operation of outward causes, as the necessary imperfection of their own make.

THIS is the case at ordinary seasons, but the work will become much more arduous and obstructed at some nicer conjunctures. Let any one look back to the commencement of those civil disorders, that entailed a long train of misfortunes on our country, and brought on the melancholy event of this day; let him say, when the evil spirit of discord was gone forth, what compliances would have satisfied the demands, what prudence could have penetrated the designs, what wisdom could have guarded against the artifices of those wily and intrepid statesmen, who conducted the dark councils, and formed the desperate resolutions of that age! What hand could have stopt the torrent of enthusiasm, when it had gathered strength by the secret courses through which it passed, and was swoln to such an enormous height by the lesser streams of popular faction and discontent, that had fallen into it? What resolution could have stood out, when the most insolent demands were

made under the modest name of humble petitions? When those, who loudly resented any restraints on the freedom of parliamentary debate, discouraged that freedom by exposing those who used it to the rage and insults of the populace? When many of unrepachable character were loaded with fines, or oppressed in their civil rights, without any legal proof or imputation of offence, but their being "favourers of a malignant party?" When men of the most approved and tried integrity were removed from all places of public trust under the notion of being "delinquents and evil counsellors?"

It is not probable indeed, that all who engaged in the first opposition to arbitrary measures, either foresaw or intended the grievous mischiefs, that followed. Many might only design to correct the excesses of power, to bring the several parts of government to their proper ballance, and to reduce those hidden reserves of authority, which had occasionally been exerted under the name of prerogative, within the known limits and boundaries of law.

As it is difficult to form a judgment, so it would be endless to make conjectures about the true character, views, and motives of the principal actors in that turbulent scene. But if we attend only to the evidence of facts, does not the whole course of those transactions throw a strong suspicion of insincerity on some of the chief leaders, who under pretence of redressing grievances, reforming abuses, and rectifying government, at length overturned the constitution? Did not those, who pretended to suspect the performance of the engagements made by the King, break in a notorious manner many engagements entered into by themselves?

Did they not under the fair professions "of seeking no-
"thing but his Majesty's honour, and of earnest intentions
"to advance his service," plainly aim of stripping him of
all his power, and reducing him to a state of absolute sub-
jection to their own will? Was not all power at length,
through new and various arts of management, engrossed by
a faction, and all the rights of the crown, the nobles, and
the people swallowed up in that fathomless gulph, "the
"privilege of Parliament?" And did they not proceed, after
the mock solemnity of a legal prosecution, to execute that
horrid act of cruelty on their Sovereign, which has brought
a foul reproach on our country, and fixed a lasting blemish
on the protestant name?

EVENTS of this unusual nature have a powerful effect
in rousing the attention of men, and introducing a serious
cast of mind; they may therefore be, and were doubtless
intended to be of use, as proper instruments of moral and
religious improvement. A due recollection of the dreadful
evils, which preceded and followed this unnatural act of
violence, will furnish many proper hints of instruction to all
the different parts of the community.

GOVERNORS, spiritual and civil, may be warned by the
calamitous issue of these transactions, not to exceed the just
bounds of their authority, as settled and prescribed by the
constitution. On the terms of keeping within these bounds
their several offices were undertaken, and ought to be ad-
ministered. Some acts of power in imposing taxes on the
people in an illegal manner, and inflicting harsh penalties in
matters of a religious concern, heightened that jealousy and
distrust, which a former weak administration had raised, and

blew up; we find, the latent sparks of discontent into such a flame, as spread a general desolation through these kingdoms, and ended in the total subversion of the establishment.

PRINCES may also hence learn the necessity of paying a strict and inviolable regard to their professions and engagements. Charles either practised upon by the loose casuistry of his courtiers, or deceived by his own prejudices about the dispensing nature of regal power, had receded too far from some of his declarations. This ill-advised conduct had made such unfavourable impressions about his good faith, and given so much room for his enemies to charge him with insincerity, that every overture of agreement was suspended, till numbers were at length worked up to so hostile a temper, as opposed and frustrated every prudent method of accommodation.

THE painful remembrance, of what our country suffered, should also dispose the governed, to use all proper means to prevent a return of the like sufferings; and one of the best means to prevent them is to have a due sense of the obligations we are under to respect the office, and to maintain the lawful authority of our Sovereign. This dreadful convulsion of the state would never have happened, had not both prince and people been faulty in their conduct; had not some arbitrary and illegal claims in the one put it in the power of designing men to raise such a ferment among the other, as made them lose in their turn all prudence of councils and moderation of temper.

WE may also see in this melancholy era of our history, that other dangers are to be apprehended in a free state, besides

sides the exorbitant power of the crown. Our fore-fathers indeed suffered much from its incroachments, but they suffered more from the artifices of those enthusiastic and crafty leaders who opposed them; who ever used the best words when they meant to do the worst things, and knew how to cover the most mischievous designs with the plausible appearance of religion and public good.

THE sudden fluctuation of human power is strikingly presented to us in the dark picture of those tumultuous times. We there see the liberties of the people oppressed and endangered by despotism: we soon see the same people roused by the sense of repeated grievances fly out into the utmost excesses, sweep down like a torrent all the legal fences of authority, trample on all the constitutional rights of the prince and the hereditary privileges of the nobles, dissolve the whole frame of our antient government, and blend the several orders of the state in the wildest anarchy and confusion.

FROM the review of those various evils, which our ancestors so sensibly felt, let us learn to value, justly and as we ought, that mild and legal constitution of government, under the protection of which we live; and which was purchased for us by the last glorious and successful struggle, which our fathers made in defence of our civil and ecclesiastical rights. This sacred trust, planned by their wisdom, preserved by their courage, and best secured to us, as we trust, by the settlement of the crown in his Majesty's Royal and Protestant House, this sacred trust let us zealously endeavour to transmit, intire and unimpaired to our posterity.

F I N I S.

